

What About the Church League for Industrial Democracy and the Radical Movement in the Episcopal Church?

An Open Letter to the
Bishops and Deputies to
the General Convention of
the Protestant Episcopal
Church at Cincinnati, Ohio

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What About the Church League for Industrial Democracy and the Radical Movement in the Episcopal Church?

To the Bishops and Deputies to the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church at Cincinnati:

You have found on your Convention program that an organization called the Church League for Industrial Democracy is scheduled to have a speaker almost every day for the period from twelve-fifteen to one o'clock P. M.

We are sure that you will wish to know (if you happen not to know) about this Church League for Industrial Democracy—what it is—what its antecedents are—what it wants.

The purpose of this leaflet is to tell you.

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For twenty years and longer, there has been a world-wide movement toward radicalism—toward Communism—toward world revolution. This is no mere fiction—it is a fact. It is not accidental—it is carefully planned by some of the most astute and thorough planners the modern world has seen. It is the direct work of the "Third Internationale" in Moscow.

The Third Internationale is that political body that several years ago openly launched its plan to bring the entire world under the control of Moscow. If you will look on the editorial page of the Communist Daily Worker, published in New York City, you will find the legend (under the hammer and sickle)—"Central Organ, Communist Party, U.S.A. (Section of Communist Internationale.)"

We fully recognize that many good people who are capable in their own affairs, smile at the idea that a revolution could be carried out in the United States.

But listen to George E. Sokolsky, nationally known columnist, who tells us of the similar scepticism which he noted everywhere in Moscow in the summer and fall of 1917, on the very eve of the Russian cataclysm:

"Every night the cafés chantants were filled with the bourgeoisie. They were still eating caviar and drinking champagne. The artists sang humorous songs about Lenin and Trotsky, and the business men applauded with merriment. They would make money, they felt, no matter what kind of politician was in power.

"In the end they had nothing. Their property, their human rights, even their lives were taken from them. I met many of their wives and daughters later in Harbin and Peking and Shanghai where they were forced to earn their living by the only means left to them."

In the light of such a tragic historic precedent, is it prudent for us Americans to be scornful of our own Communist schemers?

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Naturally, the American people are not so simple that Communism can be "sold" to them under that label. No one knows this better than the Communist. Hence these radicals have organized, or have captured the control of, several hundred organizations under all sorts of names—some of them quite appealing. Mr. Walter Steele, acting for the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, in December 1934, laid before a committee of Congress the names of over 600 such organizations.

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One organization with radical aims is the Church League for Industrial Democracy, of which Bishop Edward L. Parsons is President and Rev. William B. Spofford is Executive Secretary.

To save your time, we need only to quote pertinent parts of resolutions passed last winter by the Church League for Industrial Democracy and which are to be presented to the Bishops and Deputies of the General Convention for action. These are as follows:

"Therefore moved by the joint compulsion of the desperate needs of human society and the inescapable demands of the Christian faith and hope, we unite around the following basic principles:

1. We reject the profit-seeking economy with its

private ownership of the things upon which the lives of all depend.

2. We seek to establish a social economy which, under collective ownership and democratic control of the common means of life, will make possible the highest potential development of persons and of society.

3. In our efforts to accomplish this basic change in the organization of society, we commit ourselves to the democratic method.

4. We propose to support the necessary political and economic action to implement these aims.

5. In all this we rely upon the availability of spiritual resources adequate for the redemption of society."

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A striking characteristic of the radical movement in America is the interlocking directorates which widely prevail between radical organizations. Thus many of the officers and of the Executive Committee of the Church League for Industrial Democracy also appear among the sponsors of other radical organizations, some of which are undoubtedly communistic. Bishop Parsons, for instance, is a Vice Chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union. (Roger N. Baldwin, the directing head of the Union, said in his own autobiographical sketch in the Thirtieth Anniversary Year Book of his Class of 1905 at Harvard College—written in 1935—that his "goal is Communism".)

Miss Mary Van Kleeck, a Vice President of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, is a director of the American Civil Liberties Union. Miss Vida Scudder, another Vice President of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, is a member of the National Committee of the American Civil Liberties Union, and is a Vice President of the League for Industrial Democracy, whose object is, as stated on its letterhead—"Education for a New Social Order based on Production for Use and Not for Profit." Rev. William Spofford, the Executive Secretary of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, is Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, and a member of the National Bureau of the League against War and Fascism (of which Earl Browder, general Secretary of the Communist Party, is a Vice Chairman). Mr. Spofford is also a member of the Board of Delegates of the North American Committee for Spanish Democracy.

Many additional illustrations of this interlocking nature could be given, but time and space forbid.

Let it be said here that the communists and other radicals have taken strongly in recent years

to the word "democracy" in reference to their work. Thus the "Spanish Democracy" refers to the communistic so-called "Loyalist" Government of Spain. Radicals generally in Europe and America are prone to speak about the war of Democracy against Fascism and Nazism. They actually include Soviet Russia as one of the "democratic" peoples.

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Representatives of the Church League for Industrial Democracy will talk to you ingratiatingly about "Christian Socialism". But Socialism and Communism are identical in all but name. Their objectives are essentially the same—they differ only in method. The Socialist wishes to wipe out existing institutions in America—preferably by the ballot. The Communists want to take a short cut and do the same thing by force—by bloodshed. They prefer the Russian method. It will be recalled that the official name of what is popularly known as Soviet Russia is the "Union of Socialist Soviet Republics".

Socialist- and Communist-inspired organizations in the United States are found boring into practically every phase of our national existence—into our schools and colleges—into labor activities—into other churches as well as the Episcopal Church. There seems to be one all-prevailing motive behind it all—to foment discontent with American institutions—to overthrow America.

* * *

We hold three convictions with respect to this whole matter.

First. It seems to us that the great duty of the Church is to stir up ever-increasing spiritual life in its individual members. By constantly stressing Christian virtues, and training men in that self-discipline which we call the Christian way of life, the Church is performing a great and unique service. The solution of shifting, economic problems must be a secular matter. The Church's province is to deal with those eternal spiritual verities which neither shift nor change.

This task of infusing greater spiritual life is a vast one. Surely it cannot be said that it has been so far accomplished that the Church as an organization may consider itself free to proceed into other fields. As a matter of fact, other fields—such as the field of the economic life of the nation, while it concerns all people as members of the economic body, is nevertheless a field where those who

devote their lives to it can and should be depended upon, if they are good Christians, to apply constantly the Christian doctrines they have learned.

Our second conviction is that, for all its faults, the various economic and social institutions that make up the American way of life have given a higher standard of life and living to a larger proportion of the people than any other system in any country at any time. We readily grant there is room constantly for further improvement. And just as we would expect, further improvement is constantly being made.

And our third conviction is that, since Communism is against all religion—especially the Christian religion, for the Episcopal Church to embrace the views of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, would be to invite disaster to the Church itself.

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An examination of the Convention program discloses that the following are among the persons who are to address the Bishops and Deputies to the General Convention, on behalf of the Church League for Industrial Democracy:

NORMAN THOMAS—head of the Socialist Party in the United States. Mr. Thomas clearly disbelieves in the American System of government as we have known it.

LAURENCE OXLEY—who is to speak on "Justice for the Negro". The Church's interest in the Negro is no new subject.

PROFESSOR REINHOLD NIEBUHR of Union Theological Seminary—is one of the best known radicals in the United States. Like most of the others, he disbelieves in the American System—has spent a large part of his life in subversive activities.

REV. HOWARD KESTER of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. The method of handling the tenant farmer's problem is shot through with radicalism.

ROGER N. BALDWIN, to whom we have referred above.

A. J. MUSTE, of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The New York Office of this organization tells us that it is the American Division of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. General Amos Fries of Washington says in his book entitled, "Communism Unmasked" that seven years ago this latter organization published a pamphlet entitled, "Christ and the Class War."

HOMER MARTIN—President of the United Automobile Workers of America. Due to the activities of the C.I.O. in the automobile industry last winter and spring, we had actual civil war in the State of Michigan. Are we to precipitate the Episcopal Church directly into this bitter controversy?

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You will see from your program that these daily talks, under the auspices of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, are described as "forums." On September 15, 1937, as Chairman of the Layman's Association, I addressed a letter to Presiding Bishop Perry, pointing out that since these were to be "forums," and since a forum is a meeting where both sides of a controversial subject are presented, the Church Layman's Association requested an opportunity to furnish speakers on the other side.

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We submit the above for your information.

Very sincerely yours,

MERWIN K. HART,

Chairman

CHURCH LAYMAN'S ASSOCIATION